

# IOWA BIRD LIFE

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY THE

## IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

VOL. VI

DECEMBER, 1936

NO. 4



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The Iowa Ornithologists' Union was organized at Ames, Iowa, February 23, 1923, for the study and protection of native birds and to promote fraternal relations among Iowa bird students.

The central design of the Union's official seal is the Eastern Goldfinch, designated State Bird of Iowa in 1933.

Publications of the Union: Mimeographed letters, 1923-1928; 'The Bulletin,' 1929-1930; 'Iowa Bird Life,' beginning 1931.

**SUBSCRIPTION RATES:** In Iowa, \$1.00 a year. Outside of Iowa, 50c a year. Special rate for all libraries, public or college, 50c a year. Single copies 15c each. (Keep the Editor informed of your correct address.)

**EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION OFFICE**  
WINTHROP, IOWA

Entered as second-class matter February 9, 1932, at the post office at Winthrop, Iowa, under the Act of March 3, 1879.

## WHEN AUDUBON VISITED IOWA

By FRED J. PIERCE

Almost a century ago John James Audubon made his memorable trip up the Missouri River, an expedition which had for its objective the acquisition of material for the work on the 'Quadrupeds of North America,' on which Audubon and his sons, John and Victor, were at that time engaged. It was a very successful trip, viewed from any angle, and the day-by-day journal in which Audubon recorded the happenings in full detail is a document of historical and ornithological importance. The account of the slow navigation of the Missouri is an interesting narrative, especially in the present day of rapid travel. Hunting experiences of all kinds are well described. References to the Indians and the early history of the Plains, as well as abundant description of the wild life found there, make the journal of absorbing interest to the naturalist, the student of pioneer life, and the general reader.

In his voyage up the Missouri River Audubon touched the shores of what was later to become the state of Iowa. In the limited space available here it is our desire to show what bird life he encountered while passing Iowa territory. The Missouri River Journal is given in its entirety in 'Audubon and His Journals', by Maria R. Audubon with zoological and other notes by Elliott Coues, 1897 (see Vol. I, pp. 447-532; Vol. II, pp. 1-195). From the two volumes of this work we have drawn the material for this article.

Audubon with four companions, Edward Harris, John G. Bell, Isaac Sprague, and Lewis Squires (the names of the first three were perpetuated by Audubon in naming new birds discovered on this journey—Harris's Finch, Bell's Vireo and Sprague's Lark), left St. Louis as passengers on the steamboat 'Omega' on April 25, 1843. The steamer was a primitive wood-burner, said to be one of the slowest in operation on the river, yet the trip to the Yellowstone River was the fastest on record at that time. Fort Union was reached on June 12, 48 days after the start. The fort stood near the mouth of the Yellowstone River and was the base of Audubon's hunting trips and short expeditions for many weeks after their arrival. The party left Fort Union on August 16, floating downstream on a flatboat without power, and arrived at St. Louis on October 19, 1843.

On the voyage upstream the 'Omega' passed the northwestern tip of Missouri and entered the Iowa-Nebraska section of the river on May 8. On this date Audubon's journal mentions that "Harris shot another specimen of the new Finch" (which was named in his honor later), and "we saw Parrakeets and many small birds, but nothing new or very rare."

On May 9, Audubon records: "Another fine day. After running until eleven o'clock we stopped to cut wood, and two Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were shot, a common Blue-bird, and a common Northern Titmouse. We saw White Pelicans, Geese, Ducks, etc. . . ." After passing "Belle Vue," or Bellevue as it is written now, in what is Sarpy County, Nebraska, he saw, presumably on both sides of the river, Fish Hawk, Savannah Finch, Green-backed Swallows, Rough-winged Swallows, Martins, Parrakeets, Black-headed Gulls, Blackbirds, Cowbirds, House Wrens, Blue Herons, Clay-colored Bunting, Henslow's Bunting, and Crow Blackbirds. Somewhat above the present site of Council Bluffs the first Yellow-headed Troupial was seen by the pilot of the boat.

The boat was stopped for military inspection on May 10. This necessitated a delay of several hours which was welcomed by Audubon and his companions as an opportunity to explore the shore country north of where Omaha and Council Bluffs now stand. Audubon visited an encampment of soldiers and while seated in front of the captain's tent,

he heard the note of a bird new to him. " . . . . As it proceeded from a tree above our heads, I looked up and saw the first Yellow-headed Troupial alive that ever came across my own migrations. The captain thought me probably crazy, as I thought Rafinesque when he was at Henderson; for I suddenly started, shot at the bird, and killed it. Afterwards I shot three more at one shot, but only one female amid hundreds of these Yellow-headed Blackbirds. They are quite abundant here, feeding on the surplus grain that drops from the horses' troughs; they walked under, and around the horses, with as much confidence as if anywhere else. When they rose, they generally flew to the very tops of the tallest trees, and there, swelling their throats, partially spreading their wings and tail, they issue their croaking note, which is a compound, not to be mistaken, between that of the Crow Blackbird and that of the Red-winged Starling. After I had fired at them twice they became quite shy, and all of them flew off to the prairies. I then saw two Magpies in a cage, that had been caught in nooses, by the legs; and their actions, voice, and general looks, assured me as much as ever, that they are the very same species as that found in Europe." On his way to "the high Bluffs back of the prairie," Audubon saw many Yellow-headed Blackbirds, a pair of geese, two Yellow-crowned Herons, Red-winged Blackbirds, Cowbirds, Crow Blackbirds, a great number of Baltimore Orioles, a Swallow-tailed Hawk, Yellow Red-poll Warbler, Field Sparrow and Chipping Sparrow. He mentions that Robins were very scarce, and Parakeets and Wild Turkeys plentiful, while "Sprague killed another of the beautiful Finch." Their boat resumed its journey in due time, and that night it was tied up at a point three miles above the hills known as Council Bluffs, which bluffs are well above the city of the same name. He says that all hands went on shore to cut wood for the boat; Harris and Bell on shore saw several bats and three Wild Turkeys.

The next day's journal entry is rather brief, but he mentions seeing Turkey Buzzards on a sand-bar, a large Raven which passed at 100 yards, White Pelicans, Geese, Black-headed Gulls and Green-backed Swallows. Harris shot a Yellow-rumped Warbler.

On May 12, he refers to Wild Turkeys, Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Wild Geese, Mallards, Wood Ducks and Bank Swallows. A Blackburnian Warbler, a Yellow-winged Warbler, and a few finches were collected as specimens. That night the boat tied up at the shore opposite a promontory known as Blackbird Hill, the burial place of an Indian chief of that name. The next morning, May 13, while the wood-cutting was in progress, Bell walked to the top of the hills and shot two male Lark Buntings and a Lincoln's Finch. Later, after the boat started, they passed under some cedar-covered bluffs which contained clusters of nests which they believed belonged to Cliff Swallows, though no birds were seen there. Many ducks and geese were seen, and at a wooding-place Harris shot a Wild Turkey hen which weighed nearly twelve pounds. That evening they passed the burial bluff of Sergeant Floyd, one of the members of Lewis and Clark's famous expedition who did not live to complete it. A few minutes later, before coming to Floyd's Creek, several Turkey-cocks were flushed from their roost. Audubon commented that if they had been on shore they "could have accounted for more than one of them." "This evening is dark and rainy, with lightning and some distant thunder, and we have entered the mouth of the Big Sioux River, where we are fastened for the night. . . . Had the weather been clear, and the moon, which is full, shining, it was our intention to go ashore, to try to shoot Wild Turkeys; but as it is pouring down rain, and as dark as pitch, we have thrown our lines overboard and perhaps may catch a fish."

At this point Audubon left Iowa territory and went on to experience thrilling adventures on the upper Missouri River frontier. It was a land in which deer, elk, antelope, wolves, buffaloes and other wild life

abounded. His experiences with the Indians and trappers are of interest. The journal is well worth reading in its entirety.

On his return journey, the mouth of the Big Sioux River was reached on October 1, and Iowa was entered again. From his journal: "Passed the Sioux River at twenty minutes past eleven. Heard a Pileated Woodpecker, and saw Fish Crows. Geese very abundant. Landed below the Sioux River to shoot Turkeys, having seen a large male on the bluffs. Bell killed a hen, and Harris two young birds; these will keep us going some days. Stopped again by the wind opposite Floyd's grave; started again and ran about four miles, when we were obliged to land in a rascally place at twelve o'clock. Had rain and hail at intervals. Camped at the mouth of the Omaha River, six miles from the village. The Wild Geese are innumerable. The wind has ceased and stars are shining."

A brief journal entry on October 2 mentions that a supper was made from excellent young geese. On October 3, Audubon states that "plenty of Sandhill Cranes were seen as we passed the Little Sioux River," and "saw three more Deer, another Wolf, two Swans, several Pelicans, and abundance of Geese and Ducks." Two Mallards were killed that day. On October 6, he mentions killing two Pelicans after passing the mouth of the Platte River. He records that "Bell skinned the young of *Fringilla harrisi*," on October 7, but the locality where the bird was secured is not named.

At this point the barge passed out of the Iowa section of the Missouri River, and Audubon looked upon Iowa for the last time in his life. The Missouri River Expedition was a fascinating one for all those who participated. It marked an epoch in the life of the great naturalist, for Audubon was nearly 70 years old and did not take another long journey after returning to his home in New York. He died in 1851.

## BIRD NOTES IN THE MIMEOGRAPHED LETTERS OF THE IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION 1926-1928

Believing that the occasional bird notes in the mimeographed letters of the Union have reference value, we feel justified in putting them into permanent form through publication in 'Iowa Bird Life.' While we are presenting them in somewhat abbreviated form, no essential details are omitted. The first bird notes appeared in the fifteenth letter of the series, and the full collection of notes is here given in chronological order—as transcribed and edited by the Editor of 'Iowa Bird Life.'

### LETTER NO. 15, APRIL 1, 1926

T. H. Whitney, of Atlantic, reports the Northern Shrike there during the past winter.

Miss Kathleen Hempel, of Elkader, one of our enthusiastic bird-banders, had the unusual experience of banding a White-breasted Nuthatch which had three legs.

Mrs. F. May Tuttle, of Osage, reports observing a flock of 30 or 40 Cedar Waxwings feeding on frozen apples, a favorite winter food.

Chas. J. Spiker, of Morningside College, Sioux City, in a walk of 55 miles on February 12-13-14, observed a Kingfisher, Harlan's Hawk, and Bohemian Waxwing.

E. D. Nauman, of Sigourney, reported a male Towhee on January 31, and an Evening Grosbeak on January 1; the latter remained for several days.

Dr. LeRoy T. Weeks, of Tabor, reports that: "While out east along the Nishnabotna River, I heard a gang of Crows swearing about something and thought I would sneak around as close as I could and see.

When I was within about 75 yards of them, a Great Horned Owl flew laboriously away and I thought my game was up, but not so. I noticed that most of the Crows still remained, still keeping up their profanity, so I pussy-footed along until within about 50 yards, when I could make out an unusually large Goshawk. When it flew I still thought it a Goshawk; but it happened to fly across a patch of sky that was free from intervening limbs, and I saw that it was a Bald Eagle."

W. M. Rosene reports that two Bald Eagles were shot near Ogden during the past winter.

LETTER NO. 16, JUNE 15, 1926

Mrs. Lee, of Atlantic, had the following species at her winter feeding tables: Chickadee, White-breasted Nuthatch, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Flicker, Cardinal, Slate-colored Junco, Brown Creeper, Blue Jay, Goldfinch, and Tree Sparrow. At one feeding-shelf, near the kitchen window, Mrs. Lee found that she could discourage the English Sparrows by tapping on the glass, and this did not drive away the native winter birds. Two Russian olive trees planted by Mrs. Lee in the spring attracted Cedar Waxwings.

A Ruby-throated Hummingbird, seen moving against a background of wild crabapple blossoms, is described; this bird was seen on May 15, during the Union's field trip at Atlantic.

On Sunday, May 16, 20 members of the Atlantic Bird Club left Atlantic at 5:30 A. M. on a trip to the Fontanelle Forest Reserve, south of Omaha. The morning hours were spent in this forest, which consists of about 2,000 acres along the bluffs on the west side of the Missouri River. The woods were filled with Redstarts and other warblers, and in the ravines Cardinals, Oven-birds, Wood Thrushes and vireos filled the air with song. The Arkansas Kingbird was noted, and several other species not found before.

LETTER NO. 17, OCTOBER, 1926

A scheduled field trip was held by the Des Moines Audubon Society through Birdland Drive on September 12, the fall migration of warblers being the topic of the day. Warblers observed were: Mourning, Connecticut, Redstart, Nashville, Louisiana Water-thrush, Oven-bird, Black and White, Blackburnian, and Wilson's. All were observed in a space 200 by 300 yards of thick underbrush, heavy tree growth, and bordered by Union Park Lake.

A field trip at Ogden, by Pres. Walter Rosene, Walter Rosene, Jr., Russell Clark, and Secy. Kenneth Nelson, revealed a large list of birds, including among the warblers Redstart, Blackburnian, Black and White, and Black-throated Green. It was a good hawk day, with the following species observed: Marsh, Broad-winged, Sharp-shinned, Red-shouldered, and Red-tailed. Kingfishers enjoyed Iowa's September high water, traveling at times far from the rivers and tributaries to stand watch over the flooded lowlands.

LETTER NO. 18, CHRISTMAS, 1926

McCook Lake lies less than a dozen miles beyond the Big Sioux River in South Dakota. This lake and several other small bodies of water, all within a quarter or half mile of one another, are cut-offs left by the shifting channel of the Missouri River. The Sioux City Bird Club made a trip to McCook Lake on October 3, 1926, with the following birds recorded: Towhee, Rusty, Red-winged and Yellow-headed Blackbirds, Geese, Cardinal, White-breasted Nuthatch, Crow, Harris's, White-throated and Tree Sparrows, Chickadee, Slate-colored Junco, Yellow-shafted Flicker, Downy Woodpecker and Robin. Miss Anna Erskine reports on a second trip to McCook Lake on October 10, 1926, with the following birds recorded: Upon or bordering the lakes were Great Blue Herons, Pied-billed Grebes, Wood Ducks, and Coots; in dogwood or sumach thickets or in the woods were White-throated Sparrow, Myrtle Warbler, Robin, Bluebird, Cardinal, Downy, Hairy and Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Flicker, Rusty, Red-winged and

Yellow-headed Blackbirds, White-breasted Nuthatch, Chickadee, and Slate-colored Junco; during the morning a Sharp-shinned and a Cooper's Hawk were seen; the total list of this trip was between 25 and 30 genera of birds.

A trip by the Sioux City Bird Club to a ravine north of Stone Park, Sioux City, in November, 1926, added a Magpie and a Red-tailed Hawk to a list of other more or less common birds.

T. M. Murdoch, on a trip to Oto, Iowa, on October 25, 1926, reports having seen a Tufted Titmouse, four coveys of Quail, two pairs of Cardinals, Ring-necked Pheasants and Slate-colored Juncos. Mr. Murdoch's plan of mixing nuts and crushed sunflower seeds to attract birds resulted in his keeping three Chickadees with him last winter, and so far this year he has ten.

The bird-banding station of Mrs. J. A. Dales in Sioux City, at which she has banded 749 birds of 30 species, is described at some length with the different kinds of traps listed. These species are mentioned in connection with the trapping: Harris's Sparrow, Slate-colored Junco, Chickadee, Oriole, Kingbird, Goldfinch, Yellow Warbler, Downy Woodpecker, Robin, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Purple Martin, and Bluebird.

On the evening of November 23, 1926, a business man of Sioux City shot a Double-crested Cormorant. The bird was identified by Walter W. Bennett.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Mourning Dove frequently nests late in western Iowa. I believe I have three records of September nesting in which eggs were hatching or about to hatch, one of which was this fall. I have noticed a tendency for the bird to build less of a nest as summer goes on, although these September records were of well built ones in trees. There is also a tendency to build no nest at all but to lay eggs among the leaves on the ground during August. Other birds nest in the fall occasionally. A few years ago, A. J. Anderson, Sioux City taxidermist, reported a nest of fresh Kingbird eggs in September. This year there was a Robin's nest that hatched eggs in September in our front yard. It is believed that most cases of fall nests are ones in which the birds have been disturbed in raising their young, perhaps having one or two nests destroyed before their final attempt. The American Golden Plover has been reported among the small lakes along the Missouri River during recent years at rather irregular intervals. Anderson once reported it from Badger Lake. But it was found last spring in greater numbers than at any time during the past 15 years. May 17, 1926, a beautiful male was observed at Brower's Lake south of Sergeant's Bluff. He was only a short distance away and was observed for a long time. The bird was in a flock of yellow-legs, sandpipers, godwits and Semipalmated Plover. During the two weeks prior to this there were several that seemed to stay at this lake and were observed several times. To see a Golden Plover gives a bird lover one of his greatest thrills, for the time will soon come when they may be seen no more.—Walter W. Bennett, Sioux City.

Walter Bennett was with me both times when I saw the Golden Plover in Iowa, first in our Bobolink field on May 16, 1926, and later a single individual down at Long Pond near Perry. I have a fairly good record of the nesting of the Whip-poor-will for this year, as I worked with the old bird while she was brooding the two eggs and I watched the chicks until they left the nest. I first saw the eggs on June 5, 1926; they hatched on either the 13th or 14th and left the nest on June 22, at the age of about eight days. Although they were not fully feathered out, they were bouncing around in the underbrush and I never saw them again. My latest record of the Whip-poor-will is September 11, 1923, which was the same date of my finding a young Mourning Dove. My warbler records for the fall of 1926 are as follows: Black and White, Sept. 19; Nashville, Sept. 14 and 19; Tennessee,

Sept. 9; Myrtle, Sept. 26 and Oct. 10; Black-throated Green, Sept. 19; Connecticut, Sept. 9; Redstart, Sept. 19.—Walter M. Rosene, Ogden.

Here are some data regarding late nesting of the Mourning Dove. On about September 14, I was told that a Mourning Dove had two young in a nest. On September 19, I went out to see them and found two young about five days old, both dead. The parents had been disturbed a great deal the day before, and as the weather was cold, I suppose they died because of exposure.—Dr. F. L. Roberts, Spirit Lake.

A bird resembling one of the larger sandpipers was found this fall in an injured condition in a field northeast of Ogden. Due to faded fall coloration, it was not identified at once. It was displayed to various bird students in Des Moines and died the following day. It was sent to Professor Dill at Iowa City, and he identified it as the American Golden Plover. It is a coincidence that we found her in the same field where we saw that flock of six last spring (three miles northeast of Ogden). Do you suppose that one of the flock was crippled last spring and she had lived out there all summer without my seeing her? The break in her wing was not a new break, and I can hardly make myself believe that this bird was taking this route for the fall migration when they are supposed to go by way of the Atlantic coast.—Walter M. Rosene, Ogden.

#### LETTER NO. 19, APRIL, 1927

Secretary Nelson and Mr. Dawson recorded the following species on a huge marsh at East 14th and Euclid, Des Moines: American Coot, 7 pairs; Scaup Duck, 5 pairs; Ring-necked Duck, 5 pairs; Killdeer, 4 pairs; and the Shoveller Duck, 1 male.

#### LETTER NO. 20, JUNE 14, 1927

In this letter is an account of the fifth annual meeting of the Union, held at Des Moines, April 30-May 1. The complete bird list of the field trip is included. At 5:30 A. M. on May 1, the various groups left the Savery Hotel and visited many districts about Des Moines before returning to McRae Park for the May morning breakfast. Here the full bird list was compiled, as follows: Horned and Pied-billed Grebes, Baldpate, Blue-winged Teal, Shoveller, Ring-necked and Scaup Ducks, Coot, Great Blue Heron, Sora Rail, Wilson's Snipe, Pectoral Sandpiper, Killdeer, Mourning Dove, Bob-white, Cooper's, Broad-winged and Sparrow Hawks, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Belted Kingfisher, Downy and Red-headed Woodpeckers, Northern Flicker, Chimney Swift, Kingbird, Crested Flycatcher, Phoebe, Prairie Horned Lark, Blue Jay, Crow, Cowbird, Yellow-headed and Red-winged Blackbirds, Eastern and Western Meadowlarks, Orchard Oriole, Bronzed Grackle, Goldfinch, Lark, White-crowned, Chipping, Tree, White-throated, Field, Lincoln's and Swamp Sparrows, Towhee, Cardinal, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Purple Martin, Barn, Bank, Rough-winged and Tree Swallows, Migrant Shrike, Red-eyed and Blue-headed Vireos, Black and White, Tenn., Yellow, Myrtle, Magnolia, Blackburnian, Palm and Prairie Warblers, Louisiana Water-thrush, Maryland Yellow-throat, Redstart, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, House and Prairie Marsh Wrens, White-breasted Nuthatch, Tufted Titmouse, Black-capped Chickadee, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Wood Thrush, Robin, Bluebird.

#### LETTER NO. 21, FALL OF 1927

A. T. Watson and Mr. Nelson of Des Moines have observed the following warblers (during about the last week of September): Black and White, common; Nashville, common; Tennessee; Magnolia; Black-throated Green; Oven-bird, common; Redstart; Myrtle; Palm; Canadian; Connecticut, several.

\* \* \* \* \*

The nest and young of the Blue-winged Warbler were found and photographed by Secy. Nelson at the Boy Scout camp near "The Ledges" on June 20. The adult birds were elusive, and although the



approximate (within 12 feet) location of the nest was known, it could not be located for some time. The adults were most persistent about remaining with the young during the presence of intruders so that with the young ones, the trim buzzing mature songsters were included in several of the pictures. After searching the entire field for two days, with the help of a group of 30 scouts from the camp, the nest of a Bobolink (with eggs and young) was found. Although four pairs of Bobolinks seemed to be nesting in the field, only the one nest was found. Good pictures of the nest, eggs and young were obtained. The behavior of the adult Bobolinks was much different from the Blue-winged Warblers, as they were never to be found near the nest and did not attempt to protect the young while their pictures were taken; they remained at a distance of at least 40 feet, with their mouths filled with worms and insects for the nestlings.—Kenneth Nelson.

We have all read about the dances of some of the water and shore birds. When first reading that the Killdeer at times performed a dance, I was much interested, for here was a bird so common that a person should be privileged to see its dance. This treat came to Mrs. Palas and me last June. On June 23, we were on the road about ten miles southeast of Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, and when crossing a small bridge, we heard the familiar song or call of the Killdeer. About 50 yards from us were five birds hopping, bobbing, running and calling. Four of them were usually in a line side by side, but all were in motion. They hopped and ran out of line but would soon be back in formation. Repeatedly a bird would turn one-fourth around, face the side of his neighbor and then jump over the neighbor's back, again assuming his position in the line, facing the same direction as the others. While they seemed quite unconcerned about us, they were facing us all the time when in line. This was also about the direction of the sun. The fifth member was also hopping, bobbing, running and calling, always quite apart from the formation of the quartette. We were unable to determine whether he was a necessary adjunct to the whole performance or a non-conformist. The dance was held on a sand-bar along a small clear-water creek. We watched them for about ten minutes and left with the feeling that we had been favored with a real treat.—A. J. Palas.

#### LETTER NO. 22, JANUARY 1, 1928

The 1927 Christmas bird census lists of the Des Moines Audubon Society at Des Moines, and Walter Rosene and Robert Walker at Ogden, are given. These were published in 'Bird-Lore', XXX, 1928, pp. 58-59, and are omitted here.

Fall warbler records submitted by Mrs. F. May Tuttle, of Osage, are for birds seen in her yard, August 28 to October 9, 1927: Redstart, Maryland Yellow-throat, Oven-bird, Yellow, Wilson's, Black and White, Tennessee, Nashville, Mourning and Black-throated Green Warblers.

Fall warbler records from George E. Bentley, of Boone (October 1 to 16, 1927): Black and White, Prothonotary, Worm-eating, Bay-breasted, Tennessee, Nashville, Myrtle, Blackburnian, Connecticut, Redstart and Oven-bird.

Fall warbler records from Walter Rosene, of Ogden (October 11 to 18, 1927): Black-poll, Myrtle and Tennessee Warblers.

A. T. Watson and Kenneth Nelson, of Des Moines, recorded the Black-poll and Mourning Warblers in addition to those given under their names in Letter No. 21.

#### LETTER NO. 23, APRIL 7, 1928

Dr. F. L. R. Roberts, of Spirit Lake, banded and set free a Bronzed Grackle on June 8, 1927. He was notified by the Biological Survey that the bird had been caught in a bird trap at Beaumont, Texas, on February 7, 1928, by R. E. Harder.

On March 16, 7,000 geese in migration were observed—Blue, Canadian, Snow and White-fronted Geese in flocks of from 25 to 800.



They were northward bound and had no doubt followed the Missouri River during the full migration trip. (The locality is not mentioned, although it is evidently Sioux City.)

On April 1, a party of Des Moines Audubon Society members journeyed to "Long Pond," 12 miles southwest of Perry, for a day of waterfowl observation. Conditions were excellent and the following species were observed: Shoveller, Blue-winged Teal, Mallard, Baldpate, Green-winged Teal, Pintail, Redhead, Canvas-back, Lesser Scaup, Ring-necked Duck, Buffle-head, Old Squaw, Ruddy Duck, American Merganser, Blue Goose and White-fronted Goose. Shovellers, Mallards, Baldpates, teal and Scaups were among the most common for the day. Three flocks of Blue Geese of from 7 to 15 each, and two flocks of White-fronted Geese of about 25 each, visited the lake during the day then continued north. Coot, Lesser Yellow-legs, Great Blue Heron and Wilson's Snipe were also recorded.

Various birds seen by Kenneth Nelson on a trip to the Pacific coast are listed in this letter. Since these have no relation to Iowa, they are omitted here.

#### LETTER NO. 24, SEPTEMBER 19, 1928

Mr. Palas mentions a visit to the home of Fred J. Pierce, near Winthrop, on May 17, and reports seeing a pair of Great Horned Owls.

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On May 15, last, I had the pleasure to see the American Golden Plover in large numbers in Fayette County. I had not seen these birds in migration since I was a youth on the farm in Clayton County. I also enjoyed hearing and seeing Prairie Chickens on this trip.—A. J. Palas.

#### GENERAL NOTES

**Magpies in Western Iowa.**—Some of my friends among the boys were south of Pierson among the hills on Sunday afternoon, October 11, 1936, and they reported a large flock of birds which were strange to them, but when they described them I knew they had seen Magpies. On October 13, I saw a flock of about 50, six miles east of Pierson, and on the same day one of our business men saw a very large flock southeast of town. The birds seem to be here in large numbers. It will be interesting to know how far east in Iowa they are observed.—WIER R. MILLS, Pierson, Iowa.

**The Great Blue Heron as a Winter Bird.**—On December 23, 1935, while taking the Christmas bird census with Fred Pierce and Harry Telles in the Backbone State Park, Delaware County, Iowa, a Great Blue Heron was seen. When "birding" along the Maquoketa River near the custodian's residence, we were very much surprised to hear a Great Blue utter its characteristic "squawk" as the startled bird arose from the spring-fed stream and flew away, almost over our heads, to other feeding grounds. The first snow of the winter had come the previous day and four inches lay upon the level. During the preceding week it had been as cold as ten below zero. We can understand how the bird might feed in such sheltered open water, but how could it endure the sub-zero nights? We had hoped to visit the park later, to learn, if possible, whether or not the heron stayed on through the winter, but due to weather conditions the return visit was not made. It does not seem probable that the bird would be able to survive the severe weather of the month of February, 1936. There seem to be few, if any, records of the Great Blue Heron in Iowa at this time of year. In 'Bird-Lore' for the years 1926 to 1935 I find no mention of it in the published bird censuses. In Roberts' 'Birds of Minnesota', the "latest" migration record is "Dec. 21, 1922. . . . exceptional." —MYRLE L. JONES, Pomeroy, Iowa.

**Bay-breasted Warbler and Prairie Falcon in Western Iowa.**—As there are not many records of the Bay-breasted Warbler for western Iowa, it may be of interest to record that I had a very good view of a female on the morning of May 15, 1936. The bird had been bathing in a spring in the woods, and when I approached it flew to a twig about six feet above the ground where I observed it for some time as it preened its feathers.

On January 8, 1936, I saw a Prairie Falcon in flight. I had seen it two days before in the same place but the distance was greater and I was not certain enough to record it.—B. O. WOLDEN, Estherville, Iowa.

**Bird Records in the Waterloo Region.**—Most of my field trips in 1936 were with Rev. Mark Shockey of Waterloo. My list to November 10 numbered 149 species. Rev. Shockey, having more time for trips, identified 174 species. A list of the more uncommon birds follows. Duck Hawk, March 10; Pigeon Hawk, March 10; Wilson's Phalarope, May 4; King Rail, May 13; Hooded Merganser, March 26; Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, May 11; Red-breasted Nuthatch, January 10; Horned Grebe, in Waterloo near Mullan avenue bridge, April 24; Osprey, near Elk Run east of Waterloo, April 25; Yellow-crowned Night Heron, in a small pond near Elk Run, May 1. Rev. Shockey and wife saw this heron first and 'phoned me. I observed it intently for some time within 30 or 40 feet, and it seemed quite tame. The yellow patch on the head was distinct and there was no doubt about its identity. Next day it was gone and it was not seen again.

Rev. Shockey had these on his list also: Woodcock, three miles north of Dunkerton; Least Bittern, near Waterloo; American Merganser, at Fisher's Lake near Waterloo; Brant, at Casebeer's Heights east of Waterloo; Dowitcher, near Gilbertville; Semipalmated Plover, near Tama; Semipalmated Sandpiper, near Waterloo. George Faulkner saw a Mockingbird at Gates Park in Waterloo.—HARVEY L. NICHOLS, Waterloo, Iowa.

**Snow Geese and other Birds.**—In the fall of 1935, five Snow Geese (four adults and one immature) were seen on a pond about two miles south of Hudson. We were worried about them, for they were very tame and it was in the hunting season. The morning after we had found them a local man was boasting of a wonderful goose he had shot. However, the Snow Geese stayed at the pond for a week, and a little educational effort on the part of my husband protected them. The men frightened them away every morning before they began to shoot. On the same pond on April 19, 1936, we saw 10 White-fronted Geese at close range. In an adjoining cornfield were feeding a large flock of Canada Geese, which arose at our approach in the auto, but the White-fronted Geese remained. On November 11, 1936, we counted 98 Mallards on this pond—the largest flock we had ever seen in this section. We hoped the hunters wouldn't find them.

On November 3, 1936, a mail carrier brought to me a Great Blue Heron that had been shot and its wing broken. I didn't have a place for it, so called a farmer on whose ponds the Great Blue had been a welcome resident. He took it home, and in a day or two, finding the bird in good condition except for the wing, telephoned Conservation Officer John C. Jago, who came for it to add to his newly-formed "zoological gardens" in Byrnes Park, Waterloo. Here he has two ducks, taken from hunters, and two raccoons.

On November 1, 1936, we saw a beautiful Western Red-tailed Hawk at close range, northeast of Independence in Buchanan County. A few miles farther, about six miles west of Lamont, we saw another. I had only one record of the bird before this—on October 7, 1930.—MRS. ROBERT I. BORDNER, Hudson, Iowa.

**Magpies in Plymouth County.**—On October 10, 1936, while riding on the Illinois Central Railway, the noise of the train flushed two Magpies from a clump of willows along the right-of-way, about one mile east of Oyens, Iowa. This is early for these birds to appear in Iowa and may indicate they will be seen outside the limits of their usual range. They were also reported as quite numerous just across the Iowa line in South Dakota at this time.—ETHAN A. HEMSLEY, Dubuque, Iowa.

**Magpies and other Birds in the Estherville Region.**—Magpies were reported from the vicinity of Fort Defiance State Park at Estherville in October. When visiting the park on November 15, 1936, I saw several of the birds. The deep, wooded valley of this park evidently is to their liking, as this was one of the several localities where they were seen during their pronounced eastward movement in 1921-22.

Cardinals, which have been observed rarely here for a few years, have been seen frequently in High Lake woods during this November. One was also seen out in the open country in a small farm grove a mile from the Minnesota line and several miles from any natural woods.

An Osprey was seen at High Lake in June and several times later in the summer. In September there were two on Mud Lake. Although once common around these lakes, none has been seen for several previous years.—B. O. WOLDEN, Estherville, Iowa.

#### NECROLOGY

**Dr. Harry M. Kelley**, a charter member of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, and professor of Biology at Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, since 1894, died April 10, 1936. He had not been well for a number of years, and a few weeks before his death he became more seriously ill of a heart ailment, with complications. He was born 68 years ago in Harrisburg, Penn. He held the degrees of A. B. and A. M. from Bucknell University, A. B. and A. M. from Harvard, and L. L. D. from John B. Stetson University. Prior to taking up his work at Cornell College he had been an instructor at Central Pennsylvania College, at Harvard and at Northwestern. For a number of years he had spent his summers as a Naturalist Ranger in Yellowstone National Park, with Ichthyology as his specialty there.

As a biologist his interests covered a wide range, and he held membership in a number of scientific organizations, including the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the Iowa Academy of Science, American Ornithologists' Union, and others. He was interested in Iowa ornithology and we are glad to remember him as one of the early supporters of our organization. He was a genial, kindly individual to meet, and we sincerely regret his passing.—C. J. S.

#### RECENT BIRD BOOKS

**MORE SONGS OF WILD BIRDS**, by Albert R. Brand (Thomas Nelson and Sons, New York, 1936; cloth, pp. 1-116, illustrated; three double-faced phonograph records in cover; price, \$2.50).

On May 9, 1936, while on the field trip of the Iowa Ornithologists' Union, Myrle Jones, Ethan Hemsley and the reviewer found a bird in Keosauqua State Park that we were certain was the Kentucky Warbler. The most striking thing about the bird was its loud, whistled song—"Sweet Burr-Lee, Burr-Lee, Burr-Lee, Burr-Lee," with accent on the word "Lee" and given in a rising tone of voice. In pitch and loudness it resembled the Oven-bird's song considerably. The bird spent much time in the dense ground vegetation in the woods, but when it sang it mounted to the top branches of a tree and poured out its notes. It seemed that this bird could be none other than the Kentucky Warbler, yet not one of us had ever before heard the song of this species. Search through a shelf-ful of bird books, each with

the song of the Kentucky Warbler reduced to semi-suggestive words, shed but little light on the matter and left us uncertain as to what this bird's song really was. Several months later the recorded song on Mr. Brand's phonograph records re-created our Kentucky Warbler in the Keosauqua woods and left no doubt in our minds as to our singer. Just one solution of a vexing problem such as ours is worth the price of the book!

Mr. Brand's first book, 'Songs of Wild Birds' (1934), was accompanied by records reproducing about 25 bird songs. The present book brings the total up to more than 75 songs, and the author expects to continue the series until nearly all North American birds with distinctive songs have been recorded. It is a task of no small proportions, in a field in which Mr. Brand is the pioneer. As a medium for providing instruction to bird students in one of the most difficult phases of bird identification, these reproductions are without an equal, while Mr. Brand's services in securing them will be of inestimable value to students for many years to come.

The book opens with chapters on 'Confessions of a Sound Recorder' and 'The Significance of Bird Song.' The rest of the book is devoted to an extensive account of birds' songs and singing habits, which, when combined with the records, gives the student a solid foundation upon which to work.—F. J. P.

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New members are: Miss Frieda Troeger, Des Moines; Miss Ella Pine Miller, Red Oak; Dr. Warren N. Keck, Cedar Rapids. Dr. Keck began teaching at Coe College in September. For the past three years he taught zoology at North Dakota State College. He gave a course in ornithology there, and this work in bird study will be continued at Coe. He is a native of Iowa, with home at Keosauqua. His degrees of B. A., M. S. and Ph. D. in zoology were received from the University of Iowa, and he has been an active bird student during his Iowa residence.

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Myrle L. Jones, our enthusiastic bird-banding president, has banded 3,000 birds since 1933. He banded 1,000 of these since May of this year. At the October meeting of the Des Moines Audubon Society he gave a talk on his work which was very much enjoyed by the Des Moines group.

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We should be glad if more members would send us their field notes and articles for publication. It was necessary to dip into the past for material to fill the present number of 'Iowa Bird Life.' We have a mutual interest in bird work, and the best way to keep track of one another's activities is through the columns of your official publication. Let's hear from you at regular intervals.

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